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HARLAN'S AMERICAN HISTORY TEST IN THE NEW TRIER TOWNSHIP SCHOOLS

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I. HISTORY IN GENERAL

History is a systematic narrative of past events, or, in the light of modern historical scholarship, it is the science of the progressive development of human society. The social and economic condition of people, their racial affinities, and physical environment exercise determining influence upon their history and find expression in their thought, their art, and their politics. History deals with the social structure and its successive forms and recognizes as inseparable allies all sciences which contribute to a knowledge of man as a social being and his relation with the physical world.

As a science, history is primarily inductive. It proceeds from a body of concrete facts which critical study links together according to the sequence of time and causation. Afterward, deductive processes may be used, but always sparingly and cautiously.

Historical method comprises four processes: the collection of facts; the arrangement of these facts according to the sequences of time and causation; the criticism by which the value of the facts is determined; and the interpretation of the facts in accordance with the results of argument and criticism. These processes are all simple; they are the ordinary processes of scientific research; but in carrying them out the human equation becomes so large an element of the problem as to make it essentially different from the problems of the physical world. For this reason history can never be an exact science.

Our outlook on life differs from that of preceding ages. Recognizing the unstable nature of our whole social fabric, we are more and more capable of transforming it. Our institutions are no longer held to be inevitable and immutable creations. We do

not attempt to fit them to absolute formulas but continually adapt them to changing environment. Modern times, especially in America, reflect the consciousness of change; criticism no longer judges by absolute standards, but applies the standards of the author's own environment. Each age has its own expression, and in judging each we enter the field of history.

Experience is history. As for political science, we do not regard the national state as that ultimate and final product which men once saw in the Roman Empire. It has hardly come into being before forces are evident which aim at its destruction. Internationalism has gained ground since the world-war. It is evident that Freeman's definition of history as "past politics" is miserably inadequate. But here let me say that the present political events of today may be interpreted to some extent by the political events in the past. The most modern method of teaching history is to have children study and try to solve the problems of today by delving deep into past history to see if, by following sequences of events along a certain line of thought, they can reach some solution for current problems.

II. THE USE OF HISTORY IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

As stated above, the outcome of history study is ability to solve present-day problems. The modern textbooks, forming the basis of instruction in history, are characterized by the introduction and development of "problems" as the primary method of teaching.

A study of the ability of pupils in history may be undertaken from several different viewpoints: (1) an endeavor to determine the ability to understand present events in the light of the past; (2) skill in shifting and evaluating miscellaneous material, such as newspaper stories and contemporary doctrines; (3) ability in appreciating and comprehending simple historical narrative; (4) that ability evinced by discriminating replies to thought questions "on a given historical situation"; (5) historical ability estimated by readiness in answering questions designed to test pure historical information.

This last type of historical ability, as determined solely by information questions, of the least importance, to be sure, is most

easily tested. Buckingham and others maintain that there is a high correlation between ability to *think* and ability to *remember* history. The assumption is that the readiness with which pupils answer factual questions is a test of their general historical ability.

However, it is clear that questions of historical facts which appeal to memory cover only a part of the ability which we desire children to have. One of the most wholesome movements in teaching history today is the emphasis which is being placed upon inference, deduction, and judgment, to say nothing of the qualities of interest and appreciation. While welcoming the encouragement of judgment as contrasted with memory, we may admit that memory in its broad and true sense includes a great deal of the proper content of historical teaching. It is through memory and the ability to understand historical material that we achieve the aim of our study, the "ability to solve present-day problems."

III. EVALUATION AND STANDARDIZATION OF THE MINIMUM HISTORY ESSENTIALS IN OUR PUBLIC SCHOOLS

If the aim of our study is to try to solve present-day problems, it follows that our course in history should be constructed to give the child a widespread knowledge of fundamental facts of the social and economic conditions of people in different ages and to select such facts as will best afford a basis for such work and still maintain the elements of pleasure and of culture.

To the principal problem, what particular items of knowledge should constitute the minimum essentials, there are two methods of approach. One of these is based upon the assumption that the relative value of historical facts may be at least roughly determined by the frequency with which references to these facts appear in periodical literature. The actual facts to be taught in school should emphasize the kind of information represented by these recurring references, which might be assumed as part of the culture common to all people. The other method involves a "rating" by competent authorities of the relative significance of historical data. The minimum content of history as taught in the elementary school should include historical data with which everyone should be familiar. An analysis and comparison of textbooks extensively

used during a past number of years, say fifty, should be investigated by competent judges.

One of the best methods of proceeding is to assign single periods or epochs to different groups of competent judges, and to ask each group to analyze books with reference to their period, noting the topics and names common to all the books and the topics and names common to at least one-half of the books. When the minimum essentials have thus been obtained, the next step is to formulate and evaluate questions which will best test these minimum essentials.

IV. THE USE AND METHODS OF DEVISING AND ADMINISTERING HISTORY TESTS

In history there are very many items of information, some important, others unimportant. Since authorities agree on the importance of some facts and disagree on others, the selection of questions for texts is very difficult. Moreover, the questions must be carefully evaluated in order that the amount of credit to be given for each question may be scientifically determined.

Questions in examinations are generally considered equal in value. But if we judge the value of questions on the basis of their difficulty, as shown by the response of the pupils, it is seldom that the same credit should be given for answering two different questions correctly. The questions are not equally difficult, and it is the general practice to base credit for a correct answer upon the difficulty of the question; that is, less credit is given for answering an easy question than a hard one.

The series of questions in history tests usually include some of the following headings: date and events, men and events, historic terms, political parties, division of history, map study, historical inference or ability to distinguish historical material, selection of facts, causal relationship, imagination, quotations and answers, and questions that involve judgment of chronology. In the majority of tests memory is the important factor while reasoning is given only a secondary place. The writer thinks that this is the chief weakness of most tests in history. Reasoning should be given at least equal value with memory if we are to follow our aim, that the outcome of history study is "ability to solve present-day problems."

The questions, as has been said, are usually arranged in the order of difficulty, but in some cases the cycle method is used. This is much better and more diagnostic. With this method, the questions are not all of one type in the beginning. They may be placed in groups, questions ranging in each group from easy to hard. Certain questions missed in each group would prove that the pupil is deficient in a special ability or that the teaching along that line had not been sufficiently intense. In either case the teacher would ascertain the need of the pupils and class.

Ordinarily, testing is carried out with large numbers of children, and the returns have to be quickly handled. In such a case, the ease with which an information test may be administered and rated is a decided advantage. It is likewise some satisfaction to know that from the results reasonably accurate inferences may be drawn regarding types of ability other than those directly tested.

There have been about a dozen tests devised for history. Though they are open to criticism, these tests are more effective as measuring scales than examinations prepared by teachers. The questions have been very carefully selected and evaluated, and the tests have been standardized; that is, they have been administered in different cities to a large number of children, the results scored, and medians obtained. A test is not to be considered standardized until it has been administered to at least three to five thousand students.

Judd points out in the Cleveland survey that the impressive fact which always stands out in examining the results of a series of tests is the need in the schools of more definite standards of work. Teachers are working in ignorance of what they ought to accomplish and of what others are accomplishing. "Every test shows that progress from grade to grade can be clearly defined. When the results are put together, they show that there is a law of progress. Once the law is exhibited, it is possible to judge how far individual schools conform. . . . No school system can free itself from the difficulties which are so clearly revealed by these tests and comparisons. The children in different schools differ one from another; teachers of different degrees of efficiency and depth of thought are sure to be found in all parts of the system."¹

¹ Charles H. Judd, *Measuring the Work of the Public Schools* (Cleveland: Survey Committee of the Cleveland Foundation, 1916), pp. 57-58.

The truths just stated are brought into clear relief in the test which the writer administered to history classes in four schools of New Trier Township, Cook County, Illinois.

V. HARLAN'S TEST IN NEW TRIER EIGHTH GRADES

C. L. Harlan's test was selected because it seemed to the writer to cover more of the essential elements than some of the other tests. Harlan has not published any information concerning the making and standardization of his test. Materials for the test may be secured from the Bureau of Educational Research, University of Illinois.

In selecting his questions, Harlan evidently attempted to include topics encountered by every pupil who takes a course in American history. He could not select topics which are taught with equal emphasis, because distribution of emphasis in teaching depends upon the pupils' interest and the teacher's method, but he did design every question to give students a sense of familiarity with the topic involved. If they failed to have adequate recall, Harlan evidently intended that they should feel that at some time they had known the facts. It is evident also that Mr. Harlan decided upon questions that range from easy to difficult, that touch upon the several different phases of history, that can be briefly stated, that afford answers easily scored as right or wrong, and that can be completed by all pupils in the ordinary history period. The following are the groups of questions in Harlan's test:

I. At the right of the page are the names of some men mentioned in American history. Fill in the blanks with the names which properly belong there.

II. Below is a list of terms used in American history. Give a particular example of each, such as: Battle: Bunker Hill.

III. Name the events which make the following places historically significant: (1) Valley Forge, (2) Gettysburg, Pa., (3) Mt. Vernon, Va., (4) Lake Erie, (5) Rio Grande River.

IV. Tell the very first thing you would do under each of the following conditions; also what you would do next:

1. If a neighbor were to present to you for your signature a petition to have some man removed from office, what would you do first? Would you sign the petition?

2. If a man imprisoned in the county jail for some serious crime should be taken out by a mob, with the intention of hanging him, what ought to be done first? Then what?

V. From the list at the right of the page, select the names of two men who were prominent in the period in which they lived and write those names under the name of the period in which they were prominent.

1. Period of exploration and discovery.
2. Period of colonial growth.
3. Revolutionary period.
4. Civil War period.
5. Period from Spanish American War to the present.

VI. Give the year in which the following events occurred:

1. Discovery of America.
2. Signing of the Declaration of Independence.
3. Settlement of Jamestown, Virginia.
4. Settlement of Plymouth Colony.
5. First battle of the American Revolution.

VII. Name the most important event connected with the following dates: 1803, 1820, 1812, 1765, 1850.

VIII. Below are some general statements concerning the history of our country. Prove that they are true by stating a typical example or instance in American history which has shown them to be true.

1. One method employed by a nation in acquiring territory is by conquest.
2. The final decision of civilized people is that the enslavement of one people by another is wrong.
3. The national congress has regarded unrestricted immigration as dangerous to the welfare of the nation.
4. An exaggerated idea of the power of the president has at times endangered the life of the president.

IX. The following topics represent matters of importance in the history of the United States. State definitely of what significance each has been.

1. Articles of Confederation.
2. Mason and Dixon's line.
3. Monroe Doctrine.
4. The tariff.

X. Below is stated a list of causes. State one very important immediate historical result of each.

1. Dred Scott decision.
2. Embargo Act of 1807.
3. Daniel Boone's journey in Kentucky, 1768.
4. The "Spoils System."
5. Lewis and Clark Expedition.

Sources of data.—For the present study material was secured in June, 1920, from all of New Trier Township eighth grades,

including the towns of Glencoe, Winnetka, and Wilmette. Classes from each town have been scored together, except in Winnetka; the writer wished to compare his own class with that of the other schools.

Administration of the tests.—The tests were given by the class teachers in the different schools, and all of the papers were corrected by the writer. These were marked according to the Harlan key and scored upon individual scoring sheets.

For Table I, "General Results," only questions receiving a credit of two were counted. The combined results by schools, expressed in the percentage of correct replies to each question, are shown. Harlan has given a credit of two to each of the fifty questions, apparently endeavoring to secure questions that would range from easy to difficult. This has not proved to be the case in the present study. Table II shows the range of ease and difficulty as a result of the present test and the ranking of questions.

Here it can be readily seen that some of the questions are very differently placed. Nos. 1 and 2, the discoverer of America and the first president, hold the first place in both ranks; from there on many great changes of place are found. Nos. 4, 7, 22, 30, 48, and 50 shift only one or two places, showing an even distribution of knowledge on these questions in the students of this test and those of the standardized test. The greatest change of place is No. 40, Lake Erie, and No. 42, Rio Grande. These two, with a difference of twenty places, are easily accounted for; full credit was not given in the answer key if the answer was "Battle of Lake Erie," which many of the New Trier students gave, omitting the date 1812. In No. 43 many students gave "boundary of United States and Mexico," not saying "disputed boundary," the answer expected.

The last in Harlan's fifty found the forty-fourth place in this ranking, while the next to the last has the last place or highest score in this scale, if the questions were to be ranked according to value. These changes show that varying stress has been put on these different questions in different parts of the country.

Inspection of Table III shows a wide range of individual scores in each class and between the different schools. School II ranks

TABLE I

GENERAL RESULTS

School I, 34 pupils; School II, 18 pupils; School III, 56 pupils;
School IV, 94 pupils

	SCHOOL I	SCHOOL II	SCHOOL III	SCHOOL IV	TOTAL
Exercise I. Men and Events					
1. Columbus.....	100	100	96	100	99
2. Balboa.....	91	100	84	100	93
3. Washington.....	97	100	96	100	98
4. Lafayette.....	88	100	84	89	90
5. Cornwallis.....	94	100	87	100	95
Exercise II. Historical Terms					
1. Colony.....	85	95	89	100	92
2. Pioneer.....	73	95	74	98	85
3. Treaty.....	56	89	81	65	72
4. Explorer.....	79	100	92	98	92
5. Proclamation.....	56	100	80	92	82
6. General.....	88	100	96	100	96
7. Territorial expansion.....	32	89	64	100	71
8. Compromise.....	85	100	75	97	89
9. Decisive battle.....	67	100	85	97	87
10. Admiral.....	86	100	88	97	92
Exercise III. Events and Places					
1. Valley Forge.....	50	84	37	75	61
2. Gettysburg.....	22	72	38	74	51
3. Mount Vernon, Virginia....	50	84	44	91	67
4. Lake Erie.....	32	61	22	69	46
5. Rio Grande River.....	22	50	24	76	43
Exercise IV. Reasoning					
1. Petition.....	56	84	62	87	72
2. Mob.....	84	62	42	57	50
Exercise V. Periods and Men					
1. Exploration and discovery..	79	95	64	96	84
2. Colonial.....	75	89	72	90	81
3. Revolution.....	79	89	59	94	90
4. Civil War.....	79	89	70	87	91
5. Present.....	75	89	62	93	79
Exercise VI. Events and Dates					
1. Discovery of America.....	88	100	33	97	79
2. Declaration of Independence	73	100	52	79	76
3. Jamestown.....	22	89	11	62	46
4. Plymouth.....	15	84	13	61	43
5. First battle, Revolution....	26	95	25	66	53

TABLE I—*Continued*

	SCHOOL I	SCHOOL II	SCHOOL III	SCHOOL IV	TOTAL
Exercise VII. Dates and Events					
1. 1803.....	29	95	9	53	46
2. 1820.....	26	89	20	74	52
3. 1812.....	79	100	31	87	74
4. 1765.....	18	95	7	17	34
5. 1850.....	44	100	31	83	64
Exercise VIII. Statement and Proofs					
1. Conquest.....	38	84	48	68	59
2. Enslavement wrong.....	18	84	61	57	55
3. Immigration.....	20	61	22	58	40
4. President's life endangered..	32	50	14	75	42
Exercise IX. Topics and Significance					
1. Articles of Confederation...	15	95	28	68	51
2. Mason and Dixon.....	15	89	48	49	50
3. Monroe Doctrine.....	22	95	22	68	51
4. Tariff.....	22	77	35	56	47
Exercise X. Causes and Results					
1. Dred Scott.....	9	50	7	47	28
2. Embargo Act.....	15	72	15	20	30
3. Boone's journey.....	18	89	22	27	39
4. Spoils system.....	6	44	17	36	25
5. Lewis and Clark.....	29	77	20	42	42

the highest. The marks of this school range high because the teacher had given a number of other standardized tests to this class and had based the review on the work emphasized in the various tests.

In School II the highest individual score is 98 and the lowest is 58, with a median of 91, while in School III the highest is 81 and the lowest 14, with a median of 51. Question 1, Exercise IV, concerning the petition, produced the widest range of difference in the number of correct replies. On this question, children of one of the schools averaged 95 per cent; children of another school, 7 per cent. Similarly, Questions 14 and 15 in Exercise II were answered with 100 per cent accuracy by pupils of one school and with 31 per cent accuracy by pupils of another school. Obviously the respective topics had been taught intensively by some teachers, and had been treated casually by others. At any rate, variations

TABLE II

RANKING OF QUESTIONS AS RESULT OF NEW TRIER TOWNSHIP TEST

Ranking, Present Test	Harlan's Ranking	Answers to Questions	Percentage of Correct Replies
1.....	1	Columbus	99
2.....	3	Washington	98
3.....	11	General	96
4.....	5	Cornwallis	95
5.....	2	Balboa	93
6.....	15	Admiral	92
7.....	9	Explorer	92
8.....	6	Colony	92
9.....	26	Civil War period	91
10.....	4	Lafayette	90
11.....	25	Revolutionary period	90
12.....	13	Compromise	89
13.....	14	Decisive battle	87
14.....	7	Pioneer	85
15.....	23	Period of exploration	84
16.....	10	Proclamation	82
17.....	24	Colonial period	81
18.....	27	Present period	79
19.....	28	1492	76
20.....	29	1776	74
21.....	35	1812	72
22.....	21	Petition	72
23.....	8	Treaty	71
24.....	12	Expansion	67
25.....	18	Mount Vernon	64
26.....	37	1850	61
27.....	16	Valley Forge	61
28.....	38	Conquest	59
29.....	39	Enslavement	55
30.....	32	1775	53
31.....	34	1820	52
32.....	17	Gettysburg	51
33.....	42	Articles of Confederation	51
34.....	44	Monroe Doctrine	50
35.....	43	Mason and Dixon's Line	50
36.....	22	Mob	50
37.....	45	Tariff	47
38.....	30	1607	46
39.....	33	1803	46
40.....	19	Lake Erie	46
41.....	31	1620	43
42.....	20	Rio Grande	43
43.....	41	Power of president	42
44.....	50	Lewis and Clark	42
45.....	40	Immigration	40
46.....	48	Daniel Boone	39
47.....	36	1765	34
48.....	47	Embargo	30
49.....	46	Dred Scott decision	28
50.....	49	Spoils system	25

are distinctly marked both in the ranking of questions and in the relative showing of various schools and classes.

SUMMARY

1. Simple questions on fundamental aspects of history are shown to produce low scores in some places. This does not show a very thorough mastery of basic historical facts.

2. Each class or group shows a wide variation in individual scores.

3. In general, biographical questions and the historical terms are more correctly answered than the dates or the reasoning questions.

TABLE III
PERCENTAL DISTRIBUTION OF INDIVIDUAL SCORES

No. of Pupils	School	Lowest Percent-age	10 Per Cent	20 Per Cent	30 Per Cent	40 Per Cent	50 Per Cent	60 Per Cent	70 Per Cent	80 Per Cent	90 Per Cent	Highest Percent-age
34.....	I	22	31	40	42	45	52	55	64	74	77	83
18.....	II	58	80	88	90	90	91	92	93	96	97	98
54.....	III	14	35	41	47	50	51	57	59	65	70	81
94.....	IV	40	60	65	69	73	77	79	83	86	90	93
Harlan's media...		.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	86	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....

4. The average accuracy with which the different questions were answered varies from 100 per cent to 6 per cent.

5. Harlan's test is what he aims it to be, diagnostic, measuring that which we call historical ability, remembering of facts, and the ability to understand historical materials. In this study it apparently has not measured the most important objective of history study, namely, the "aim of history study is to help solve present-day problems." It does not measure this ability for there are only three questions out of fifty referring to present-day problems.

6. The writer would like to see a combination of Harlan's test for a basis for past history, A. S. Barr's idea for measuring the ability to use historical material, and some new test material based upon today's vital questions. By such a combination test the ability to solve present-day problems might be measured as correlated with the ability to remember facts and to use historical material. History tests at present are but pioneer attempts; a large field of investigation still remains.